

# Spotlight

## The formula that doesn't fail

"This one's no trouble at all," says Clara Hale of three-month old Kareem, a baby born prematurely and in the throes of a severe drug withdrawal inherited from his heroin-addicted mother. Hours after his release from the hospital, Kareem moved in with "Mommy Hale," the 80-year-old founder of the nation's only residential center for the care of drug-addicted infants.

Hailed by President Reagan as a "true American hero" in his 1985 State of the Union address, Hale—a lifelong foster mother—turned her Harlem brownstone into a nursery for drug-addicted babies 15 years ago. The 500-plus infants who have passed through Hale House have all thrived on an old-fashioned formula. Says Hale, "All they needed was love."

Babies spend the first year or so of their lives with "Mommy Hale," receiving weekly visits from their natural mothers who undergo drug-rehabilitation before be-

ing reunited with their children.

While most of her \$200,000 annual budget comes from federal and state funds, Hale is seeking additional financing for a program called Homeward Bound. Designed to reunite parents coming out of drug therapy with children who have been in foster care, the new facility will provide low-cost housing for up to one year, plus support services that include lessons in parenting skills, nutrition, budgeting, child development, and something called "negotiating the system."

Officials of other cities and even some foreign countries have approached Hale about helping to solve a problem she sadly concedes is worldwide. But, she maintains, "They need me right here in Harlem, real bad."



PETER BYRON

*Be a surrogate  
Father or Mother*